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DEPT FOR AF/S, AF/C

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/13/2018

TAGS: [PREL BY SF](#)

SUBJECT: FNL FEELS SHUT OUT

REF: A. PRETORIA 250

[B. PRETORIA 428](#)

[C. PRETORIA 775](#)

Classified By: Political Counselor Raymond L. Brown. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#). (C) On 10 April, FNL-insider Jan Van Eck expressed concern to PolOff about stalled negotiations between the FNL rebels, the SAG, and the GoB, describing the entire Burundi facilitation process as "hostile." Van Eck, who said he talks to the FNL by phone almost everyday, said that the good will and optimism built up earlier this year between the parties have evaporated (Ref A). "The FNL jumped at the first sign of good news and chose to accept South Africa's continued mediation, but in the end, the historical distrust between (SAG Great Lakes Envoy Kingsley) Mamabolo and the FNL cannot be overcome," he said.

[2](#). (C) Van Eck believes the biggest problem facing the FNL right now is the "hijacking of the political directorate by Mamabolo (Ref B)." Van Eck applauded the original members of the directorate, especially AU Ambassador Mamadou Bah and UN Deputy Special Representative Youssef Mahmoud, both of whom he believes earned the trust of the FNL. However, according to Van Eck, the SAG facilitation team is now taking full control of the directorate. He said everything is being routed through this directorate, while "(FNL Leader Agathon) Rwsa is just sitting around, receiving no foreign visitors." (COMMENT: Contrary to Mamabolo's view, Van Eck believes that the goal of the political directorate was to reexamine contentious issues that the SAG and GoB consider off the table. The FNL and GoB have been included in the directorate, but Van Eck said there has been only one meeting where the FNL was invited. END COMMENT)

[3](#). (C) Citing other concerns, Van Eck said the FNL is growing and "becoming a major destabilizer." He admitted that "there are definitely some guilty FNL guys, but the government's attempts to play down the FNL is turning them into martyrs." He also said that FNL commanders are furious with Rwsa because they feel "he's given them nothing" and are growing restless. Rwsa will not be able to control them forever, he warned. As for the FNL's rejection of immunity via executive order (Ref C), Van Eck said it will remain an issue because "immunity doesn't guarantee that they won't be harassed and the FNL doesn't trust the South African battalion to protect them."

[4](#). (C) As for next steps, Van Eck suspects the SAG will call for a regional summit. Van Eck is skeptical this will be

effective because he does not believe most SADC countries understand or care about Burundi. He also suspects the SAG will manipulate the process by courting the international community in advance to get them on the same page as the facilitation before a summit even begins.

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